

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for regulating network access, the method comprising:
    - receiving a request for network access for a user identity;
    - identifying a type of connection being sought by the user identity over the network as being among at least one of a dial-up connection, a broadband connection, a wireless connection, and a private line connection;
    - identifying the user identity for which the request is submitted;
    - identifying one or more other user identities that are associated with the user identity;
    - determining whether the other user identities that are identified as being associated with the user identity have network access contemporaneously with the received request;
    - determining types of connections used to obtain the network access by the other user identities that are identified as being associated with the user identity and determined to have network access, the types of connections used by the other user identities being among at least one of a dial-up connection, a broadband connection, a wireless connection, and a private line connection; and
    - determining whether to grant the user identity the network access requested based on the type of connection being sought by the user identity and based on the types of connections used by the other user identities that are identified as being associated with the user identity and determined to have network access,
- wherein determining whether to grant access comprises applying a set of login rules to determine whether to grant access, and

wherein applying the set of login rules comprises:

accessing login rules that indicate a first maximum number of concurrent logins using a first connection type and indicate a second maximum number of concurrent logins using a second connection type, the first connection type being different from the second connection type and the first maximum number being different from the second maximum number;

determining that the type of connection being sought by the user comprises the first type of connection; and

denying access conditioned on a number of concurrent logins of the other user identities that are using the first connection type to obtain network access being equal to the first maximum number.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the user identity is a screen name or an Internet Protocol address and the network access is Internet access.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the user identity is an e-mail address or a media access control address.

4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the type of connection sought by the user identity comprises a broadband connection.

5. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 4 wherein the broadband connection sought by the user identity comprises a digital subscriber line connection or a cable modem connection.

6. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the user identity includes an Internet Protocol address and identifying a type of connection includes identifying the type of connection based on the Internet Protocol address.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the user identity includes a network identity and identifying a type of connection includes identifying the type of connection based on the network identity.

8. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the other user identities associated with the user identity are other user identities that are associated with the same online service account as the user identity.

9-11. (Canceled)

12. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1[[9]], wherein the login rules limit the number of concurrent logins to a maximum number of concurrent logins for a predetermined amount of time.

13. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1[[9]], wherein the login rules vary based on user identity.

14. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1[[9]], wherein the login rules limit the number of concurrent logins based on temporal constraints.

15. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the login rules limit the number of concurrent logins for one or more predetermined time intervals.

16. (Canceled)

17. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein determining whether to grant the user identity access comprises denying access and further comprises sending an access denied message to be perceived by a user associated with the user identity.

18. (Original) The method of claim 17, wherein the access denied message is configured to be perceived by the user as a graphical display.

19. (Original) The method of claim 17, wherein the access denied message includes information related to the reason why the access was denied.

20. (Original) The method of claim 17, wherein the access denied message includes data related to the other user identities.

21. (Original) The method of claim 20, wherein the access denied message includes data related to the types of connections used by the other user identities.

22. (Original) The method of claim 17, wherein the access denied message includes options configured to be selectable by the user.

23. (Original) The method of claim 22, further comprising receiving an option selection from the user and granting limited network access to the user identity associated with the user in response to the received option selection.

24. (Original) The method of claim 23, wherein the limited network access comprises network access for a limited duration of time.

25. (Original) The method of claim 23, wherein the limited network access comprises network access that is limited to exchanging communications with the other user identities.

26. (Original) The method of claim 22, further comprising receiving an option selection from the user and denying network access to one of the other user identities associated with the user identity in response to the received option selection.

27. (Original) The method of claim 26, wherein the other user identity that is denied access had access to the network contemporaneously with the received option selection.

28. (Original) The method of claim 27, further comprising granting network access to the user identity after denying network access to the other user identity.

29. (Original) The method of claim 22, further comprising receiving an option selection from the user and enabling the user to register for a network access service upgrade in response to the received option selection.

30. (Currently Amended) A computer system for regulating access to an online service provider system, the computer system comprising;

- a customer account data store;
- a system state data store; and
- an authentication server configured to
  - receive a request for network access for a user identity,
  - identify a type of connection being sought by the user identity over the network as being among at least one of a dial-up connection, a broadband connection, a wireless connection, and a private line connection;

- access the customer account data store to identify one or more other user identities associated with the user identity,

- access the system state data store to determine whether the other user identities have network access contemporaneously with the received request and to determine types of connections used to obtain the network access by the other user identities, the types of connections used by the other user identities being among at least one of a dial-up connection, a broadband connection, a wireless connection, and a private line connection; and

- determine whether to grant the user identity the network access requested based on the type of connection being sought by the user identity and based on the types of connections used

by the other user identities that are identified as being associated with the user identity and determined to have network access,

wherein the authentication server is configured to determine whether to grant the user identity access by applying a set of login rules, and

wherein the authentication server being configured to apply the set of login rules comprises the authentication server being configured to:

access login rules that indicate a first maximum number of concurrent logins using a first connection type and indicate a second maximum number of concurrent logins using a second connection type, the first connection type being different from the second connection type and the first maximum number being different from the second maximum number;

determine that the type of connection being sought by the user comprises the first type of connection; and

deny access conditioned on a number of concurrent logins of the other user identities that are using the first connection type to obtain network access being equal to the first maximum number.

31. (Original) The computer system of claim 30, wherein the customer account data store and the system state data store are a single integrated data store.

32. (Original) The computer system of claim 30 wherein the user identity is a screen name or an Internet Protocol address and the network access is Internet access.

33. (Original) The computer system of claim 30 wherein the user identity is an e-mail address or a media access control address.

34. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 30 wherein the type of connection sought by the user identity comprises a broadband connection.

35. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 34 wherein the broadband connection sought by the user identity comprises a digital subscriber line connection or a cable modem connection.

36-38. (Canceled)

39. (Currently Amended) The computer system of claim 30[[36]], wherein the login rules limit the number of concurrent logins to a maximum number of concurrent logins for a predetermined amount of time.

40. (Currently Amended) The computer system of claim 30[[36]], wherein the login rules vary based on user identity.

41. (Currently Amended) The computer system of claim 30[[36]], wherein the login rules limit the number of concurrent logins based on temporal constraints.

42. (Original) The computer system of claim 41, wherein the login rules limit the number of concurrent logins for one or more predetermined time intervals.

43. (Canceled)

44. (Original) The computer system of claim 30, wherein the authentication server is further configured to deny access and send an access denied message to be perceived by a user associated with the user identity.

45. (Original) The computer system of claim 44, wherein the access denied message is configured to be perceived by the user as a graphical display.

46. (Original) The computer system of claim 44, wherein the access denied message includes information related to the reason why the access was denied.

47. (Original) The computer system of claim 44, wherein the access denied message includes data related to the other user identities.

48. (Original) The computer system of claim 47, wherein the access denied message includes data related to the types of connections used by the other user identities.

49. (Original) The computer system of claim 45, wherein the access denied message includes options configured to be selectable by the user.

50. (Original) The computer system of claim 49, wherein the authentication server is further configured to receive an option selection from the user and grant limited network access to the user identity associated with the user in response to the received option selection.

51. (Original) The computer system of claim 50, wherein the limited network access comprises network access for a limited duration of time.

52. (Original) The computer system of claim 50, wherein the limited network access comprises network access that is limited to exchanging communications with the other user identities.

53. (Original) The computer system of claim 49, wherein the authentication server is further configured to receive an option selection from the user and deny network access to one of the other user identities associated with the user identity in response to the received option selection.

54. (Original) The computer system of claim 53, wherein the other user identity that is denied access had access to the network contemporaneously with the received option selection.



55. (Original) The computer system of claim 54, wherein the authentication server is further configured to grant network access to the user identity after denying network access to the other user identity.

56. (Original) The computer system of claim 49, wherein the authentication server is further configured to receive an option selection from the user and enable the user to register for a network access service upgrade in response to the received option selection.

57. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for regulating network access, the apparatus comprising:

- means for receiving a request for network access for a user identity;
- means for identifying a type of connection being sought by the user identity over the network as being among at least one of a dial-up connection, a broadband connection, a wireless connection, and a private line connection;
- means for identifying the user identity for which the request is submitted;
- means for identifying one or more other user identities that are associated with the user identity;
- means for determining whether the other user identities that are identified as being associated with the user identity have network access contemporaneously with the received request;
- means for determining types of connections used to obtain the network access by the other user identities that are identified as being associated with the user identity and determined to have network access, the types of connections used by the other user identities being among at least one of a dial-up connection, a broadband connection, a wireless connection, and a private line connection; and
- means for determining whether to grant the user identity the network access requested based on the type of connection being sought by the user identity and based on the types of connections used by the other user identities that are identified as being associated with the user identity and determined to have network access,

wherein the means for determining whether to grant access comprises means for applying a set of login rules to determine whether to grant access, and

wherein the means for applying the set of login rules comprises:

means for accessing login rules that indicate a first maximum number of concurrent logins using a first connection type and indicate a second maximum number of concurrent logins using a second connection type, the first connection type being different from the second connection type and the first maximum number being different from the second maximum number;

means for determining that the type of connection being sought by the user comprises the first type of connection; and

means for denying access conditioned on a number of concurrent logins of the other user identities that are using the first connection type to obtain network access being equal to the first maximum number.

58. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 8 wherein the other user identities associated with the user identity are other user identities that receive online services with the user as a group and that commonly pay for or are billed for the online services as a group.

59. (Canceled)

60. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1[[59]], wherein applying the set of login rules further comprises granting access conditioned on the number of concurrent logins of the other user identities using the first connection type to obtain network access being less than the first maximum number.

61. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1[[59]], wherein applying the set of login rules further comprises:

determining that the number of concurrent logins of the other user identities that are using the first connection type to obtain network access is less than the first maximum number; and

granting access conditioned on a number of the other user identities that are using any connection type to obtain network access being less than a third maximum number.

62. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1[[59]], wherein the first connection type comprises a broadband connection and the second connection type comprises a wireless connection.

63. (Canceled)

64. (Currently Amended) The computer system of claim 30[[63]], wherein the authentication server being configured to apply the set of login rules further comprises the authentication server being configured to grant access conditioned on the number of concurrent logins of the other user identities using the first connection type to obtain network access being less than the first maximum number.

65. (Currently Amended) The computer system of claim 30[[63]], wherein the authentication server being configured to apply the set of login rules further comprises the authentication server being configured to:

determine that the number of concurrent logins of the other user identities that are using the first connection type to obtain network access is less than the first maximum number; and  
grant access conditioned on a number of the other user identities that are using any connection type to obtain network access being less than a third maximum number.

66. (Currently Amended) The computer system of claim 30[[63]], wherein the first connection type comprises a broadband connection and the second connection type comprises a wireless connection.